

Message Text

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20

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 SAJ-01 DPW-01 DRC-01 /153 W

----- 021222

R 031100Z DEC 73 ZFD

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9539

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

USDEL JEC PARIS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 20305

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY IN LOWER HOUSE OVER PASSAGE OF CY 1974
BUDGET

1. THE CY 1974 BUDGET PASSED THE LOWER HOUSE NOVEMBER 30 AMID
CONSIDERABLE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN PRO-ADMINISTRATION AND OPPOSITION
DEPUTIES. DETAILS OF THE BUDGET BILL WILL BE REPORTED SPETEL.
REPORTED BELOW IS THE EMBASSY'S ACCOUNT OF THE STORMY SESSION THAT
STARTED IN THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 29 AND LASTING UNTIL PASSAGE
OF BILL AT 3:30 A.M. NOVEMBER 30.

2. CONTROVERSY ON THE FLOOR BEGAN ABOUT 11:00 A.M. NOVEMBER 29,
WHEN THE PRO-ADMINISTRATION MAJORITY MOVED TO CLOSE DEBATE ON THE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION BUDGET UNDER ARTICLE 113 OF HOUSE RULES. THE
MOTION PASSED EASILY. ALTHOUGH THE EDUCATION MINISTRY BUDGET WAS
NOT ITSELF AN IMPORTANT ISSUE, FOUR OPPOSITION DEPUTIES REMAINED ON
THE SCHEDULE TO SPEAK, AND THE OPPOSITION PROTESTED ITS DEFEAT
NOISILY. OPPOSITION MEMBERS MAY HAVE FELT THEY WOULD BE CUT OUT
OF DEBATE ON OTHER SECTIONS OF THE BUDGET AS WELL. CHAIRMAN NGUYEN
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BA CAN RECESSED THE SESSION AND TRIED TO NEGOTIATE A COMPROMISE

IN THE CORRIDORS. HE WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN AN EFFORT EXTENDING THROUGH THE AFTERNOON.

3. THE SESSION REOPENED AT ABOUT 8:00 P.M., AS CHAIRMAN CAN SOUGHT TO SETTLE THE MATTER FORMALLY ON THE FLOOR. HOWEVER, OPPOSITION DEPUTIES SUDDENLY MOVED TO OCCUPY THE PODIUM PHYSICALLY. CAN RECESSED THE SESSION AGAIN AS LOUD ARGUMENT ERUPTED BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND PRO-ADMINISTRATION DEPUTIES.

4. AT ABOUT MIDNIGHT, LEADERS OF PRO-ADMINISTRATION GROUP MET IN CAN'S OFFICE TO DISCUSS STRATEGY. AS DESCRIBED BY THE CHAIRMAN LATER TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER, THEIR MOOD WAS BOILING. (CAN ALSO COMMENTED THAT SOME MEMBERS OF BOTH CAMPS HAD CARRIED PISTOLS AND GRENADES INTO THE CHAMBER DURING THE DAY, AND AT TIMES HE HAD FEARED THE WORST.) LATER, CAN RE-OPENED THE SESSION AS PRO-ADMINISTRATION DEPUTIES "GUARDED" THE PODIUM. NEWSMEN WERE BARRED FROM THE CHAMBER. (IT WAS PAST CURFEW IN ANY CASE.) WITH A SCATTERING OF OPPOSITIONISTS PRESENT BUT NOT PARTICIPATING, THE BUDGET WAS PASSED IN A RAPID SERIES OF VOTES TO 3:30 A.M.

5. DURING THE MIDNIGHT STRATEGY SESSION IN CAN'S OFFICE, OPPOSITION MEMBERS TALKED TO REMAINING NEWSMEN OUTSIDE THE BUILDING AND ALLEGED THAT THE MAJORITY WAS PASSING THE BUDGET IN A RUMP SESSION IN CAN'S OFFICE. THIS WAS UNTRUE, BUT THIS VERSION DID APPEAR IN SOME NEWSPAPERS.

6. COMMENT: DISCERNIBLE UNDERNEATH THIS FRACAS IS THE FRUSTRATION THAT THE OPPOSITION FEELS AS ITS NUMBERS DECLINE AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S MAJORITY GROWS STRONGER. THIS FEELING IS PROBABLY PARTICULARLY INTENSE NOW THAT THE MAJORITY HAS PRE-EMPTED THE TRADITIONALLY "OPPOSITIONIST" ROLE OF CUTTING THE BUDGET.

7. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE INDEPENDENT PEOPLE RIGHTS GROUP, ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRESSIVE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, ADOPTED A NEUTRAL ATTITUDE THROUGH THIS ENTIRE AFFAIR. SOME MEMBERS OF THE INDEPENDENT NATIONALIST GROUP, HOWEVER, WERE IN THE THICK OF THE STRUGGLE ON THE OPPOSITION SIDE. THE PR GROUP AND THE NATIONALIST GROUP HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING A POSSIBLE MERGER IN RECENT WEEKS, AND THIS EPISODE HARDLY PROMOTES UNITY BETWEEN THEM.

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Message Attributes

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